

A Scene of the Border

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Much discussion has been had as to who was the first settler of Iowa City proper; this is esteemed an important question, and the writer is unable to settle it as he was not the first one there. Dr. Henry Murray was the first physician, both in the city and county. Wm. L. Gilbert was the first lawyer, and shortly after coming here formed a co-partnership with Wm. C. Reagan. Samuel H. McCrary was the first post master, and Mr. Fenee, of the M. E. Church, preached the first sermon, and A. T. McElwaine sang the first hymn at public worship, Henry Usher was the first blacksmith.

The approach of the winter of 1839-40 was viewed with much apprehension and anxiety, as provisions were scarce and high. How the necessities of the winter were provided for, its storms breasted, and its trials met, I hope to tell in the next ANNALS.

A SCENE OF THE BORDER.

BY ELIPHALET PRICE.

During the Summer of 1827, soon after the war-cloud of difficulties with the Winnebago Indians had been adjusted by a visit of the chiefs to Washington, accompanied by Gen. Cass, a Sioux Indian, while hunting upon the Iowa shore near the mouth of Paint Creek, shot and scalped a Winnebago, believing him to be the murderer of his brother, but who proved not to be the murderer, but the brother of "Big Wave," a chief of the Winnebagoes.

The band of this chieftain, together with others of the nation, numbering about two thousand, becoming indignant at this act, immediately assembled at Fort Crawford, and demanded of Col. Taylor, (afterwards President Taylor,) the procurement and surrender of the murderer. The officers of the Fort apprehensive that new difficulties might arise with this factious tribe if their demand was disregarded, concluded to make an effort to obtain the murderer. Accordingly an officer was dispatched to demand him of the Sioux nation, who immediately gave him up and he was brought down the river

and confined at Fort Crawford. Soon after his arrival at the Fort, the Winnebagoes assembled again and insisted upon an unconditional surrender of the prisoner to them, which Col. Taylor refused, but dispatched Lieut. Reynolds and Doctor Elwise, the Surgeon of the garrison, to have a talk with them and endeavor to preserve the life of the Indian by paying a satisfactory consideration in horses. At the conference the Winnebagoes talked in a threatening and overbearing manner, declaring that nothing would satisfy them but the taking of the life of the Sioux in their own way and by themselves.

Reynolds finding that no terms could be made with them that would conform to the suggestions of Col. Taylor, determined to make a proposition of his own, which was as follows: The Sioux should have a chance to save his life by being brought out upon the prairie, three weeks from that day, and in a parallel line seven paces to the rear of him should be placed twelve of the most expert runners of the Winnebago nation, each armed with a tomahawk and scalping-knife, and at the tap of the drum the Sioux should be free to start for the home of his tribe, and the Winnebagoes free to pursue, capture and scalp him if they could. To this proposition the Winnebagoes acceded at once, and seemed much pleased with the anticipation of great sport, as well as an easy conquest of the prisoner, whose confinement in the garrison during the three weeks, they believed would prostrate whatever running qualities he may have possessed. Their best runners were immediately brought in and trained every day in full sight from the Fort, and so accurate did they become in the hurling of the tomahawk, that they could hit with unerring aim, a tin cup swinging from the branch of a tree, at a distance of twenty-five feet. Lieut. Reynolds, who kept a pack of hounds and two or three fleet horses, and who was known throughout the hunting range of the post as a dashing sportsman, having become warmly enlisted on the side of the Sioux, determined to have his Indian in the best possible condition for the contest.

Accordingly Dr. Elwise took him in charge, prescribing his diet, regulating his hours of repose and directing the rubbing

of his body and limbs with flesh brushes twice a day, immediately before going upon the parade ground to perform his morning and evening trainings. So carefully was he trained for this race of life or death, that he was timed upon the parade ground in the presence of the garrison and a number of spectators, the third day before the race came off, and performed the almost incredible feat of a mile in three minutes and nine seconds. Reynolds had for some time been satisfied that the fleetest runner in the Winnebago nation could not overtake him, but to guard against the unerring aim of the tomahawk required a different kind of training. This was done by placing the drummer behind a screen some twenty paces in front of the Sioux so that the sound would reach him an instant before it did his opponents, and upon receiving the signal sound he was trained to make two quick bounds in a direct line to the right, and then start upon the race.

The day at length arrived; about three thousand Indians, French traders and border hunters had assembled to witness the scene, in fact it was regarded as a gala day by all—except the prisoner. Reynolds on the part of the Sioux, and the celebrated chiefs “War-kon-shuter-kee” and “Pine Top” on the part of the Winnebagoes, superintended the arrangement of the parties on the ground.

The point agreed upon for starting was upon the prairie a little to the north of Prairie du Chien, and immediately in the vicinity of the residence of John Lockwood, an Indian trader, while the race track lay along the level nine mile prairie stretching to the north and skirting the shore of the Mississippi. The Sioux appeared upon the ground accompanied by a guard of soldiers, who were followed by his twelve opponents marching in Indian file and singing a low monotonous chant, each being naked, with the exception of the Indian breechlet. Their ribs were painted white, while their breasts were adorned with a number of hieroglyphical paintings. Along the face alternate stripes of white and black were painted in parallel lines, extending from the chin to the forehead. The hair was platted into numerous thongs tasseled with a

red or white feather and fringed with small bells, while their moccasins were corded tightly around the hollow of the foot, as well as around the ankle, with the sinews of the deer; in the right hand each carried his tomahawk, while the left grasped the sheath that contained the scalping knife.

The prisoner was about twenty years old, a little less than six feet in height, of muscular, well proportioned contour, and manifested in the easy movements of his body, a wiry and agile command of his muscular powers; his countenance presented a mournful and haggard appearance, owing partly to the rigid discipline he had undergone in training, and partly to his having painted his face black, with the figure of a horse-shoe, in white, upon his forehead, which denoted that he was condemned to die, with the privilege of making an effort to save his life by fleetness. Around his neck he wore a narrow belt of wampum, from which dangled the scalp that he had taken from the Winnebago.

Soon after the parties were formed in line upon the ground, Reynolds approached the Sioux and taking off one of his moccasins, showed the chiefs that it contained a thin plate of steel, and asked if they objected to it, to which they replied with much merriment, that he might carry as much iron as he pleased. The Lieut. observing that his Indian appeared restless and uneasy, requested Dr. Elwise to come forward, who, after examining his pulse, discovered that he was much excited and that his nerves were in a tremulous condition. Reynolds immediately took him by the arm and led him out some distance from the front of the line, where he asked him if he was afraid to run? to which he replied, "I can outrun all the Winnebagoes, but I am afraid that I cannot outrun all the horses that are mounted by armed Indians." The Lieut. saw at once the cause of his alarm, and informed him that they should not interfere; he intended to ride the fleetest horse upon the ground and keep near him, and as he was armed, would see that no horseman approached him with hostile intentions. At this announcement the countenance of the Indian brightened up with a smile, his whole person seemed

lifted from the ground as he returned to his position with a stalwart stride.

The chiefs and Reynolds soon after mounted their horses and took a position each upon the right of his party, the spectators were removed from the front to the rear by the guard, when the parties were ready for the start. Reynolds, who was to give the signal for the tap of the drum, had in this arrangement, planned a movement for which the Winnebagoes were unprepared. The drummer, by this arrangement, was not to give the drum tap until two minutes had expired, after the giving of the signal, which was made known to the Winnebagoes, would be the elevation of his cap high above his head.

Reynolds, after taking a last view of the field to see that all was clear, gave the signal. In an instant the Winnebagoes threw themselves into position, with uplifted tomahawk, the eye intently fixed upon the prisoner; every muscle of the body and arm was forced to its utmost strain, and in this position they were held by the drummer for the full period of time prescribed by Reynolds. The gloating visage of the Indian, his excited mind, and the terrible strain upon his muscular powers, it was easy to discover, was fast exhausting him; at length the loud tap of the drum was given, when the Sioux with the crouching leap of the panther, bounded to the right while the whizzing whirl of the tomahawk sped its flight far to his left.

The race was now fairly commenced; three of the Winnebagoes ran with great fleetness for a mile, keeping within twenty yards of the Sioux. Reynolds, who rode a fleet animal, and was a master horseman, could move his body upon the saddle with that commanding ease which enabled him to keep all parts of the field in view without changing the course of his animal, soon discovered that his Indian had entire command of the race. During the flight of the first half mile it was with difficulty that he could restrain the Sioux from leaving his competitors far to the rear, and thus impair his powers of endurance that might be needed to guard against treachery in the distance. At length, discovering that a few

of the Winnebagoes had fallen out of the race, he gave the signal for him to increase his speed, and in a moment after, the distance between him and his competitors began to widen rapidly, showing the superior speed and endurance of the Sioux, acquired mainly, through the discipline of the white man. At the end of two miles, the last of the contending Winnebagoes withdrew from the race. There was not an Indian horse upon the ground that could keep up with him after he had increased his speed, and at the end of the fourth mile, Reynolds, finding that his horse was much fatigued, and the prairie free from enemies, also withdrew from the race. The Indian did not look back or speak as far as he was followed or could be seen, but kept his eye fixed upon the white flags that had been placed in front of him at short distances apart, for several miles, in order that he might run upon a straight line.

It was soon after reported by the Winnebagoes that he had been shot by one of their boys who had been placed in ambush near the upper boundary of the prairie. This, however, proved not to be true. The boy had shot a Winnebago through mistake, who had also been treacherously secreted for the purpose of intercepting the Sioux. This mistake, however, was never known to Reynolds or Elwise, and it was not until several years after this event, and while Gov. Doty was holding a treaty with the Sioux nation, that this Indian appeared in the council as one of its chiefs, and, after briefly relating this adventure to the Governor, he enquired where Lieut. Reynolds and Doctor Elwise were at that time. He was informed that both had died in Florida. Upon receiving this information, he immediately withdrew from the convention, painted his face black, and retired to the gloom of the forest, nor could he be prevailed upon to return until he had gone through the Indian ceremony of mourning for the dead.

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